Opinion



(Unsplash/Matteo Kutufa)



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Another shooting, another call for healing. It has been a hundred years since the end of World War I, the Great War. But tears in the fabric of the world from that war are not healed, any more than tears in U.S. society from the Civil War are healed. We've patched over some of the disruption, but in neither war's end did we really set about making peace. The Marshall Plan did a better job of repairing European economies after WWII, but there's no repairing the loss from all those deaths. And we are still reeling from the divisions of land in Africa and the Middle East, decreed by the victors of those world wars.

A rip in a piece of fabric runs along the seam or along the weave, making repair a straightforward task. Mending renders the rip invisible. But a tear is a ragged rent against the pattern of the threads. A tear in the human heart is a good metaphor.

Grief can't really be healed. We say that the day after the loss healing begins. But that's a fanciful hope. The experience of grief is not unlike the difficult task of mending a tear in a favorite blouse. It requires acceptance of the damage that's been done. It requires understanding of the cause and understanding of the patterns of one's life or the patterns of the cloth. It requires recognition that things will never be the same again.

We use that word "healing" with a facile tongue. For instance, we talk about being healed from sin as if we'd recovered from a bad cold, not considering that denial of grace changes us, hardens our hearts. But sorrow and forgiveness can soften our hearts, teach us generosity and mercy. They won't pave over the grief or make that hole in our hearts and lives invisible. But with the hard work of learning to live with our sorrow, we might become kinder and wiser.

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